

HOPETOUN HOUSE EDUCATION SERVICE
SERVANTS' FILM – ACCOMPANYING NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Known as Scotland's finest stately home, Hopetoun House lies to the west of Edinburgh and has been home to the Hope family since 1699. It is open to visitors, including school groups, and offers a programme of award-winning, curriculum linked workshops involving role play, drama and costume.

In this film we aim to show you a glimpse of Hopetoun through the eyes of a Victorian servant. It takes you through a typical day, focusing on the daily chores and comparing life above and below stairs. The following information is designed to accompany the film and promote discussion with your class.

The film begins with the arrival of a new maid about to enter employment in the House.

Arrival

- What sort of house is this and who do you think lives here?
- Who is the person who appears at the top of the front steps?
- Why does he send her back down the steps?

Servant's Bedroom

Most servants lived in and their bedrooms were often located in the attic space. The room shown here is an authentic servant's bedroom. Points of interest include:

- The chamber pot under the bed
- The hot water bottle (hot pig) on the bed
- The washbasin and jug
- The uniform laid out at the foot of the bed

Household Chores

This section shows servants at work in the Butler's Pantry and can be used to draw comparisons between then and now. Points to discuss include:

- No running water or modern plumbing
- No washing machines or tumble driers
- No electric irons
- No electric lighting
- No vacuum cleaners
- No central heating
- No flushing toilets.

What did they do or use instead?

Butter Making

- Butter would be made daily at Hopetoun House. Why do you think this was? (no refrigeration)
- What ingredients do you think were used? (Full fat milk and/or cream)
- Wooden paddles, also known as Scotch hands, were used to shape the butter.
- The butter was often decorated with a butter stamp. What stamp is used here and why?

Opening up the House

Before the family began their day, servants would be busy cleaning and preparing rooms. Jobs included:

- Opening the shutters
- Cleaning the windows
- Dusting the furniture
- Laying the fires with wood or coal
- Sweeping
- Fetching and carrying for the family
- Emptying chamber pots

Life Upstairs

This section shows the difference between the lives led by the family and their servants.

- Compare the rooms used by the family to the servant areas. Where would you prefer to be?
- How might a lady spend her day?
- How would she summon servants if she needed anything?

The End of a Long Day

A servant's day was long and did not end until all chores were completed. They enjoyed little free time and often did not see their families for months on end. Contact would be via letter, as access to the newly invented telephone would only be for the family or senior servants.

Suggestions for Follow-up Work

- Write a letter to the Butler applying for a job as a servant at Hopetoun House. Why would you be a good candidate for the job?
- Write a letter home describing your new life as a servant. Are you happy there or missing life at home?
- Write your diary entry for a typical day, from the time you get up until you go to bed. What jobs do you have to do?
- Compare and contrast life upstairs and downstairs. Or draw a picture to illustrate the differences between:
 - the entrances to the House
 - the staircases
 - the bedrooms
 - the family and servant areas.

This film is only a taster of what we offer schools. For further information about our education programme please visit our website www.hopetoun.co.uk, contact us on email education@hopetoun.co.uk or call 0131 319 3959.

